

FASHIONABLE INTELLIGENCE

ABOUT THE

“MORNING POST.”

BY

LORD ALFRED DOUGLAS

PRICE ONE SHILLING NET

Printed and Published by
ROBERT DAWSON & SON
GALASHIELS
Scotland



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<http://www.archive.org/details/fashionableintel00dougrich>

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Government by newspaper! Yes, we complain rightly enough of the power and license which, within the last few years, have so enormously increased in the hands of certain wealthy persons, who have turned what used to be the fairest and most upright press in the world into a by-word. The unfortunate thing is that there is no remedy for this corrupt and dishonest press, which is for the most part in the hands of corrupt and dishonest persons. There is only one royal way of keeping a newspaper in order, and that is to expose its malpractices in another newspaper. But, if all the papers are equally corrupt, dishonest and dishonourable, this remedy ceases, naturally enough, to be effective. The *Daily Howl* comes out with some more than ordinarily cynical piece of wickedness, and it is rebuked by the *Daily Yowl* in good set terms. But as the *Daily Yowl* itself has for years past been committing exactly the same kind of offence for which it rebukes the *Daily Howl*, nobody is one penny the worse or the better for its rebuke. An honest newspaper, belonging to a decent man and edited by a gentleman is the only remedy for England's present deplorable, press-ridden condition. Is there such a paper? I say there certainly is not in the whole length and breadth of

England* (and here I should like to insist on the important fact that England is not Scotland or Ireland).

I have no newspaper of my own. If I had there never would have been any occasion to write this pamphlet. As long as I had *The Academy* I did manage (though with a circulation that never quite got up to 5000) to keep the other papers in some sort of order. This sounds a boastful thing to say, but it is a matter of plain and demonstrable fact. What your corrupt, wicked man, or your crooked, shuffling, prevaricating, lying knave dreads is *publicity*. It is a great mistake to suppose that publicity to be effective must be enormous. Of course I do not undervalue the effect of a large circulation. It is the dream of my life to have a paper run on the lines of the old *Academy* (1907-1910), that is to say, a paper run honestly, without the slightest regard to publishers' advertisements or any kind of advertisements and having no object but to tell the truth and show up villainies and lies and frauds in the literary as well as the political and general world, with a circulation of twenty or thirty thousand. With fair backing and three or four years run I could do it easily enough. But this is by the way. What I was insisting on is that a very small circulation in the case of a pamphlet or paper will produce an astonishing result in the way of curbing and frightening evil-doers. My satire, *The Rossiad*, boycotted by practically every newspaper, bookseller and library in the kingdom, did not quite reach a circulation of a thousand copies, but the effect it produced on certain persons and a certain "movement" was and is incalculable. If I had been able to get it on to Smith's or Wyman's bookstalls I do not doubt that I should have sold at least fifty thousand copies; but, even as things are, it is not too much to say that it has altered the course of history. The same applies to my *Eve and the Serpent*. Both these pamphlets consisted of a poem and explanatory preface or postscript. Both of them contained the exposure of the most appalling public corruption and wickedness. Both were boycotted by the press and by the booksellers and libraries, but both, in spite of the boycott, achieved their purpose, not, indeed, in that dazzling public manner which poetic justice would seem to have required, but in silent, secret and deadly ways, which are not the less effective because their full fruit has not yet come to ripeness.

* I think it fair to qualify this statement in favour of "The Herald," the labour weekly. I believe this to be an honest paper, although I only agree with about half of what it says.

Now, I have a little bone to pick with the *Morning Post*, and I am going, in this pamphlet, to show up what may seem a small and insignificant piece of journalistic dishonesty and meanness. It is so small and so mean that if it merely began and ended with its effects upon myself personally I should not deem it worth the spoiling of one white sheet of notepaper. But what I am aiming at in this pamphlet is not the vindication of my private injuries or the venting of my private grievances. No. I am simply going to show the public what is the nature of the mind that controls one of the largest and most important of its daily newspapers. If I can show that it is a mind capable of the lowest kind of spite and the most incredibly base pettiness, then I shall have put one more spoke into the wheels of that undeserved reputation for disinterested magnanimity which is the principal asset and stock-in-trade of the "great London daily newspaper."

In or about April, 1917, when the Russian Revolution first broke out, I read in the *Morning Post* a leading article applauding and supporting the Revolution. Rightly or wrongly I thought it a pitiable thing that the one and only Tory newspaper in London should applaud what I immediately felt to be a movement engineered by German agents for the destruction of the Czar and the Russian Government with a view to having Russia at Germany's mercy when the responsible government was destroyed. It seemed to me also very unfair and very cowardly that the Czar, who was the friendly sovereign of a friendly country and a relative of the King of England, should be attacked, at the moment of his tragic downfall, in a *Conservative* paper. I felt so strongly about this subject that I wrote on April 17th to the Countess Bathurst. I remonstrated with her on the line that the *Morning Post* was taking. I pointed out, among other things, that the same "arguments" which were being used in the *Morning Post* against the Czar might with equal effect be used by revolutionaries against King George in England, if and when a revolution took place. I have not kept a copy of this letter. On April 19th I received a letter from Lord Bathurst, couched in the following terms:—

Cirencester House,

April 18th, 1917.

Cirencester.

Lord Bathurst presents his compliments to Lord Alfred Douglas, and having been shown the letter which Lord Alfred Douglas wrote to Lady Bathurst on the 17th inst.,

begs that Lord Alfred will desist from again writing such annoying and impertinent letters to her in future.

I replied as follows:—

Shelley's Folly,
Lewes.

April 19th, 1917.

Lord Alfred Douglas presents his compliments to Lord Bathurst, and begs to point out that Lord Alfred's letter to Lady Bathurst was addressed to her in her capacity of proprietress of the *Morning Post*, an organ of professedly Conservative principles. Considered from that point of view, Lady Bathurst is a public woman and is liable to criticism in precisely the same way as any other newspaper proprietor is liable to such criticism. A Conservative newspaper which supports and applauds revolutions and outrages on the persons and properties of reigning friendly sovereigns, and, while professing to be a patriotic paper, goes out of its way to employ a German solicitor, cannot hope to escape censure from honest persons who have the real interest of the country at heart. If Lady Bathurst wishes to avoid such censure in future, she will be well advised to put her journalistic house in order. Lord Alfred's letter to Lady Bathurst was not "impertinent," and contained nothing but perfectly legitimate criticism of Lady Bathurst's method of conducting her paper, or allowing it to be conducted. It may have been "annoying" in the sense that it is annoying to most people to have their delinquencies pointed out, but a newspaper which is so rightly critical of the errors or crimes of public men as the *Morning Post* is, cannot complain if similar criticism is occasionally extended to itself. What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander, and Lord Alfred is not likely to be deterred from doing what he thinks right by the mere consideration that such action may be disagreeable to the person or persons who may be affected by his criticism or censure. Lord Alfred has always made a point of writing to anyone, from the King downwards, whenever he has felt that the public interest demanded it, and he will, with all respect to Lord Bathurst, continue to do so. Persons who consider themselves aggrieved, especially those who employ German solicitors, have their obvious remedy. The result will probably be to disillusion them on the question of the efficacy of Teutonic myrmidons, legal or other-

wise, and to bring home to them the salutary truth that the best way to avoid criticism is so to conduct oneself as to be impervious to it.

I did not receive any reply to this missive, and, judging from its subsequent attitude, it is pretty clear that the *Morning Post* very quickly came round to my view of the Russian Revolution. Whether or not my original letter to Lady Bathurst was responsible for the change in the *Morning Post's* attitude, I am of course unable to say, but at any rate the present opinion of the *Morning Post* about the Russian Revolution is precisely the same as mine. The only difference is that I arrived at the opinion immediately on the outbreak of the Revolution, and the *Morning Post* reached it after a good deal of wobbling and at a later date. So that on the whole it would not appear that my friendly letter of remonstrance to Lady Bathurst was of a nature calculated to rouse enduringly violent feelings in her ladyship's womanly bosom. But please mark the sequel.

Very shortly after this exchange of letters an event occurred in my family which made it necessary or desirable that I should have recourse to the *Morning Post's* good offices in the way of making an announcement.

I take it that most of my readers will be aware that the *Morning Post* has, for at least fifty years, been the more or less official gazetteer of what, for want of a better phrase, one may describe in the *Morning Post's* own words as "fashionable intelligence." I am not in the least "fashionable" myself, and there is, unfortunately, nothing fashionable about embracing the Catholic religion, but when my wife did embrace that religion, (which had already been the religion of her husband and her only child for six years), it was a matter of course to send an announcement to that effect to the *Morning Post*, which has a daily column devoted to the chronicling of such events as births, deaths, engagements, disengagements, marriages, christenings, and so forth and so on. Accordingly, at my wife's request, I sent a polite note to the editor or manager of the *Morning Post* requesting him to have the goodness to insert in his esteemed columns an announcement that Lady Alfred Douglas was received into the Catholic Church on such and such a date by the right Revd. Monsignor Brown; the object of the announcement being, of course, to intimate the fact to a fairly large circle of the friends and relatives. But the *Morning Post* did not insert the announcement, and ignored my letter and a subsequent letter

from my wife repeating the request. About two weeks later I had the misfortune to lose my sister-in-law, the late Marchioness of Queensberry. A short account of her funeral, which I of course attended, appeared in most of the London papers, including the *Morning Post*, but my name was carefully omitted from the list of family mourners in that paper. It happened that my brother, Lord Queensberry, was ill in America when his wife died, and was unable to get home in time to attend her funeral, and many persons who read in the *Morning Post* the account of Lady Queensberry's funeral must have noticed that my name was conspicuous by its absence from the list of those members of our family who attended her funeral, and that no explanation as to my apparent absence was given, as in the case of my brother. I wrote to the editor asking him to rectify the omission. My letter was ignored. I then wrote to Lady Bathurst and asked her if it was by her wish that these manifestations of infantile spite were permitted in her paper. I received no reply. A good many months went by before Lady Bathurst was able to get in another "blow" at her enemy; but all things come to those who wait, and on February the 8th of this year of grace, a memorial service for my great aunt, the Dowager Countess of Mayo, took place in London. Here, obviously, was a great opportunity for Lady Bathurst, the "Miss Miggs" of modern English journalism, to "get a little bit of her own back," and this time she and her editor, Mr H. A. Gwynne (whose recent appearance as a defendant at Bow Street Police Court will be fresh in the minds of my readers), determined to do the thing in style. I attended the memorial service in company with my mother, the Dowager Marchioness of Queensberry (the deceased lady was the sister of the Dowager Lady Queensberry's mother), and the *Morning Post* gouged out from the list of family mourners, not only my name, but also that of my mother. My mother, who is over seventy years of age, had come up from the country on purpose to attend the service, and she was distressed to think that her name had been omitted. She commented on the omission to me, and I told her that my name and hers had been deliberately left out of the list of those present out of spite and to annoy me, because I had criticised the policy of the *Morning Post*, and for other reasons the nature of which may be inferred from the penultimate paragraph of this pamphlet. My mother was incredulous. She said, "It is not possible to believe that a respectable paper would behave in such a

contemptible way." I replied, "quite so, but you see the *Morning Post* is not a respectable paper." My mother, however, was unconvinced, and I suggested that she should put the matter to the test. She accordingly wrote as follows to the manager of the *Morning Post*:—"The Dow. Lady Queensberry requests that the following announcement may appear in the *Morning Post*. 'The names of the Dow. Marchioness of Queensberry and Lord Alfred Douglas were omitted from the list of those who attended the memorial service at St Anselm's Church of the Dow. Countess of Mayo.'" In order to put the matter on a basis which would preclude the idea that she was asking for a favour, she enclosed a cheque for one guinea. Her letter and cheque were dated February the 9th. On February the 13th she received the following graceful epistle from the *Morning Post, Advertisement Department*:—

Madam,

I beg to thank you for your letter of Saturday, but am instructed to inform you with regret that the Editor does not see his way to publish the announcement you enclose. I return your cheque for one guinea herewith.

Yours faithfully,

per pro the *Morning Post*,

Chief Clerk.

So there you have the *Morning Post* and its noble, patriotic editor, Mr H. A. Gwynne, and its equally noble and patriotic proprietress, the Countess Bathurst, daughter of the late Algernon Borthwick, who was ennobled in 1895 for his "services to the Unionist Party." What the nature of those services was, has not so far been revealed, though possibly one might make a guess. But among the services to the Unionist Party of Lady Bathurst and Mr H. A. Gwynne it will perhaps be worth while to mention, for the benefit of those who have read my satire "The Rossiad," that of having given employment on the "literary" side of the paper for several years to Mr Robert Ross, and to no less than two of his "private secretaries," Mr Christopher Millard, who is now serving his second term of imprisonment for unnatural offences (his first conviction and imprisonment took place some ten years ago, and it was immediately after his release that the *Morning Post* "took him on"), and Mr Frederick Stanley Smith, son of a respectable charwoman, and

ex-choir boy of St James's Church and "Dramatic Society," whose relations with Mr Robert Ross formed an important item in my plea of justification at the Old Bailey when the last-named gentleman unsuccessfully prosecuted me for criminal libel in the year 1914.*

Now the question for the English public is this:—Ought the enormous power which is wielded in these terrible times by a great daily newspaper to be left in the hands of persons whose views as to what and what is not decent and fair and honourable are those of Lady Bathurst and Mr H. A. Gwynne? I am not an Englishman myself. I am Scots on both sides of my family, with a tincture of Irish blood, and I have recently had good cause to be reminded in a very salutary way of a fact which I had come very near forgetting, namely and to wit, that the English way of looking at things, and the English view of what is right and decent and honourable, is utterly different from the Scots view and way. Personally, I prefer the Scots view, but as the French proverb has it "*tous les gouts sont dans la nature*," and if English people like this sort of thing, it is no affair of mine. But do they really like it, I wonder, and would it not be possible for them to arrive at some arrangement whereby they might get hold of all the "fashionable intelligence" they want, from a source untainted by Robert Rossism and uncontrolled by persons who use the accounts of funerals and memorial services as weapons of offence against the female relatives of those who have the temerity to criticise their public policy?

* It is only fair to say that, as far as I am aware, neither of Ross's "private secretaries" is actually at the present time writing for the "Morning Post," and that "officially" Ross's own connection with the paper was terminated some years ago. Whether or not he still continues to write for it I am unable to state positively. On the other hand it is a fact that many of his friends and associates are to this day on Mr H. A. Gwynne's staff, including Mr William Barber the "literary editor." This gentleman is an intimate friend of Ross's, and was a signatory to the "Ross Testimonial" and a most assiduous canvasser for signatures to that extraordinary document. The business and legal affairs of Lady Bathurst's organ are looked after by Sir George Lewis, who is Ross's solicitor as well as his devoted friend and most ardent champion. Apart altogether from the "Morning Post," it is not too much to say that literary journalism in London is largely in the hands or under the control of the supporters of Ross and the Ross "Movement."

Robert Dawson & Son, Booksellers, Galashiels,
Scotland, have still a few copies of
Lord Alfred Douglas' Satire:

THE ROSSIAD

With Foreword and Note of Piquant Interest.

THIRD EDITION, PRICE 1s 6d NET

The "Daily Express" says:—

Brilliant lines. Lord Alfred Douglas has written a stinging lampoon, in which he does not spare his enemies. . . . In "The Rossiad" Lord Alfred presents his readers with some really fine literature.

"Reynolds' Newspaper" says:—

Lord Alfred Douglas has produced a rhymed satire—"The Rossiad"—which, in directness and pungency, as well as in form and in title, recalls the literary methods of the eighteenth century. The author writes with a fluent pen, which he has dipped in quite a sufficiency of venom. At the close of the poem he strikes another note, and in lines of no little dignity and force calls on England to cleanse her life at home while she resists the foe at her gate.

A Catholic Priest (Army Chaplain, wounded and home on leave) writes:

"The Rossiad" is quite splendid. I have read it so often that I well nigh know it by heart. I have introduced it to many of my friends; all are unanimous in its praise. . . . You have made known, in perfect form, the canker that is eating away the heart of the country; you have unmasked a horror . . . the ending, "O England, etc.," is superb.

EVE AND THE SERPENT

With Postscript

THIRD EDITION, PRICE 1s 6d NET

“*Daily Express*” says:—

Lord Alfred Douglas has utilised his poem *Eve and the Serpent* to make a further edition with a postscript. The postscript takes up most of the booklet, which is intended to make it hot for his Majesty's judges. Incidentally it tells a strange story of domestic difficulties, a battle royal over the possession of a son, and other things that read like fiction but are really fact. . . . this *unique* poem.

“*The Irishman*” says:—

There is probably no man more sincerely hated by the Bottomley, Harmsworth, O'Connor brigade than Lord Alfred Douglas. During his editorship of *The Academy* he persistently told the truth about the humbugs and bounders who, up to his day, had gone about their evil work with impunity. The whole Press of London now boycotts him. This intense hatred predicates an inevitable victory for the greatest poet of our age. Law, journalism, and British society are arrayed against one man. But that man will triumph over them all.

Lord Alfred Douglas is best known through his books—*The City of the Soul*, and *Sonnets*. His recent work, *Eve and the Serpent*, a satire on English law, has entered a new edition in spite of a rigid boycott by the British Press.

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